

*f*orces

[1996]

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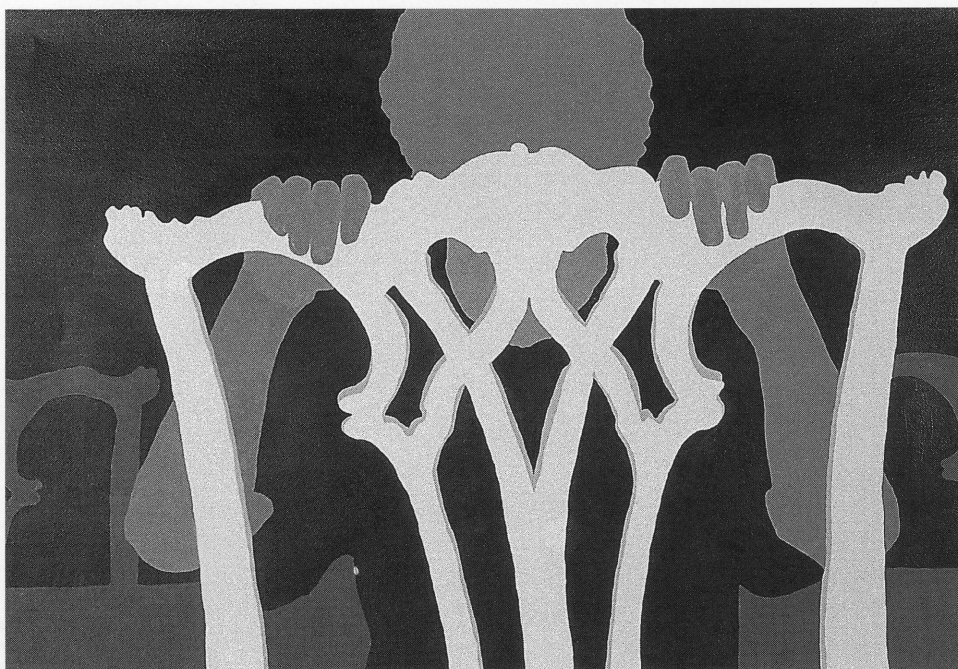
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2]

perón was a dictator who ruled argentina from 1945 until 1955, when he was overthrown by the armed forces in a bloody coup. i will not elaborate on life in a dictatorship. i will say, however, that freedom of expression is one of the first things to disappear, and my parents constantly reminded us to use caution in our behavior. they were born in argentina, but their families had come from ireland, and we spoke english. this made us suspicious, as there was, in some sectors of the population, a strong and sickish nationalistic feeling. my mother's brothers worked for the argentine railroads, property of the british who had built them. in 1948 perón expropriated them as part of his national program.

during perón's dictatorship, my godfather, one of my mother's brothers, was imprisoned and held incommunicado for two weeks; his crime was never clearly stated. when we were authorized, we visited him. the jail house was in the oldest part of town. a gloomy gray stone building, it stood on one corner detached from its neighbors; a large crowd moved around it. and so there we stood, aliens in such a crowd. at the appointed time, the door opened, and we walked into dark hallways that oozed of smothered air and gray walls that collapsed into a world of silence and despair. and then we came to my godfather, wearing a coarse gray uniform, a black number stuck on his back. to this day i have a haunting memory of that visit.

at the time, we lived in the township of rodríguez, two hours away from the city of buenos aires where we commuted by train daily to our work places. we lived in rodríguez one year so that the transition period, from country life to life in the big city, would not be too drastic on my father, who had lived all his life on a farm. we then moved to the city of buenos aires, where most of my parents' family lived.

now, let me tell you what happened to me during this prohibition time. a national election was due at the time of our move. my mother and i had not made our address change on time, so we both had to travel to rodríguez on election day to fulfill this obligation that is law in argentina. elections are held on a sunday. all stores are closed, and entertainment is banned for the day. the voting procedure is also different from that observed in the united states. in argentina, at age 18, a citizen is issued a document similar to a small passport with pre-printed pages. on election day, the clerk in charge identifies the voter with a listing, then stamps and signs the document. this is an official document, not to be tampered with, and its presentation is required when renewing passports and other official transactions. it was to be the first time i'd vote, and i felt so important with my recently acquired adulthood that i showed my document to a group of friends.

## *the day i voted for general perón*

however, when election day arrived, i wasn't thrilled with the trip to rodríguez. i was recuperating from surgery, and the thought of visiting a place where we had very few friends wasn't pleasant. the weather did not help; a fine drizzle clouded the day. my mother sensed my mood. "once we are done with the voting, we can go by the flannagans for tea." always ready to make the best of a bad situation, she quickly added, "her scones are the best i've tasted in some time."

and so we got off the train in the early afternoon of that election sunday into a sparsely populated railway station. the drizzle had turned into a fine rain that coated roads with a slippery layer, and the house stared in cold, foreboding silence. huddled under their umbrellas, elusive shadows, people hurried in the gray, gloomy silence. following the written instructions we had, we walked down unfamiliar streets. from time to time we stopped to check our instructions, until finally we arrived at an old school building where the voting was held. there were only three people in the room: two lady employees and a uniformed police officer. my mother handed in her document, and once her name was verified she was directed to the voting room.

next, i handed in my document. the employee checked my name, flipped through the pages, and opened it where she was supposed to stamp it. here she stopped, looked at it more attentively, and instantly looked up, straight into my face, askance, yet she did not utter a word. instead she showed my document to the other employee and then gestured to the police officer. i was growing apprehensive and couldn't understand what was happening. the police officer now held my document in his hand and slowly walked towards me.

"this is a serious misdemeanor, young lady." his hard look went right through me, though i was still innocent of my crime. my eyes followed the officer's pointing finger. no! i couldn't believe it. in big letters on the page where my first vote was to be recorded, one of my friends had written, "vote balbin frondizi." this was perón's opposing formula. i felt my body go into a state of total disarray. "i didn't do it, i didn't do it," i sobbed, and quickly added, "i will vote for general perón, i will vote for general perón." my whole body shook, my heart pounded, and a ticklish sensation ran down my legs.

what happened next comes back in snatches. i stood there, a leaf trapped in the wind. the police officer also stood there, a waiting expression on his face. we stood there for what seemed an incredible length of time, yet it could only have been minutes. and then, my mother burst onto the scene.

"what have you done to her?" she walked straight to where i stood by the police officer, the envelope with her vote still in her hand. the officer now turned his gaze in my mother's direction. "what have you done to my daughter?" she insisted in a louder tone this time. i now feared both of us would be thrown into some dark cell, incommunicado. with such fear, and the absurdity of our situation, i lost my voice. dumbfounded, i witnessed in awe how my mother tried to explain my misdemeanor. then, one of the lady employees ushered me into the voting room and closed the door behind me.

for a second i stood there. accusing eyes peered at me from all four walls while mine nervously searched for the ballot that had perón's name. my trembling fingers fumbled with it, folded it, and shuffled it into the envelope. dazed by the experience, and ready to rid myself of the envelope, i stepped out of the room, hesitant and eager to join my mother. at the door i found the same lady who had ushered me in. she retrieved the envelope with my vote before i reached the urn. i learned later that my vote would be annulled.

my mother forgot tea and scones at the flannagan's, and we went straight to the railway station. i had a hard time keeping up with my mother, who now walked with short, quick steps; her high heels echoed sharply in the empty streets. the rain had stopped, but water still fell. it slithered down walls in soft whispers. it rolled down gutters, plop...plop...plop...drops rippled as they hit puddles on the ground. i walked with caution; i was afraid to slip, and i had to watch each step not to get into one of the many puddles that had collected in the broken parts of the sidewalk, or to step on a loose tile and send water squirting up my legs. as it was, i was pretty wet already. i had sweated profusely. no, i had peed in my pants.

MY 9 KODAK 5053 T



9

9A

1

P520111



1

1A

MY

10

KODAK 5053 T



10

10A

[*thrust*]



# the long walk

journey here,  
with the child we all know  
her alabaster skin flushed  
from the snow  
of blues and reds  
and wonders of why  
the owl and the butterfly  
have passed her by.  
it's a dark place: it is  
this place where she roams  
a tired heart, broken hope  
and such a long walk home  
the coyote, his tricks  
or are they his trade?  
toys with the idea  
of the lessons he's made  
up of smoke and fire  
he brings them in peace  
but she sees through the glass  
of mind and spirit  
and continues her journey  
from present to past  
to future, to toil  
the rocky road  
she won't give up  
on this long walk home.  
the lake of death  
is dense with fear  
"jump right in  
it's safe my dear:  
the source has grace  
that is all you need  
to be free of struggle  
it's your chance,  
you'll see.  
so she drowns herself  
in the water she owns  
as the angel  
whispers softly,  
"come my child,  
it's been a long walk home."

home





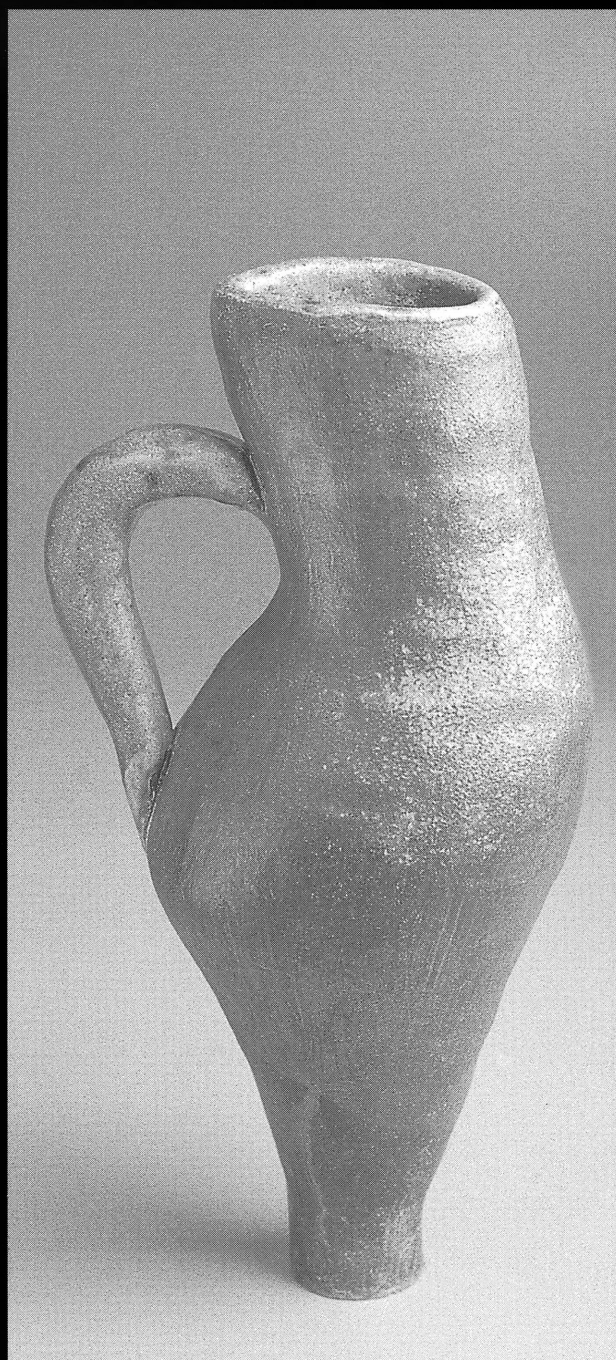




*when  
things*

# remembered

feeling stretched out of memories  
some faded and longing  
from the past,  
like yellowed photographs  
in some attic trunk  
under pillows, and behind old lamps  
hidden away for safety, nostalgia  
to keep things clear, that have gone  
the trunk, the box, the crate,  
the memories precious  
open easily and freely  
at the slightest touch  
a word, a song, a color, a smell  
a voice, a joke, a shoulder, a film  
and the emptiness is pushed away  
when things remembered are free.



# warrior

[11

often i had seen him face to face  
he was a warrior wandering through midnight  
i met him one starless night,  
when i was dancing in my favorite wilderness  
it was one of those unusual nights when i laughed instead of cried  
and let the rain drops slide down my cheeks, no need for tears tonight  
when i looked at his face i saw a little child who  
used to play freely in the summer sun  
he had eyes that reflected only innocence, his voice calm but wicked  
his hands had scars so deep, so many thorns twisted in his side  
he seemed to look past me,  
in our life together he always seemed to have a hollow look  
towards me, just me though, one kind look was all i asked for  
tonight he lifted me up under his dark wings and carried me by his side  
once i think i remember him drying a tear of mine  
but he had already missed a million...



i look into your precious eyes  
beams of light shoot to my heart.  
the anticipation of a note of a word,  
the musical sound of a glance.  
the intruding feeling of a normal emotion  
which is supernova yet superficial.



# inter



# mesh

the shade of the game,  
the starting of a habitual ritual.  
what an amazing feat with a blink of an eye,  
bass strum of heart  
it races like a horse  
winning on never inevitable though...

you cross your legs and dangle your shoe with your toe  
as i listen to what you have to say  
though i must admit that my attention drifts  
from your words to their rhythms and tones  
head in hand i get lost in thought  
or the intoxicating state that is nonthinking  
no words striking my brain...overwhelming joy  
like the strikes of the keys on a typewriter  
pounding them out...or my heart  
just the graceful slide of concepts and colors  
like a melody  
across the soft places in my mind  
don't ask me what i'm thinking  
but if you must believe me when i say  
nothing i can describe  
it's not what you want to hear  
but why should i lie?

moment

*wonderful*









# *the* beast

alive  
the streets pulse with  
the life and soul of the city  
that never sleeps.  
the beast.  
sidewalks crouch at the feet  
of the scurrying crowd,  
waiting to pounce and devour.  
boiling hot concrete, sultry streets.  
the steam rises from the bowels of the beast.  
bowels growling and rumbling at intervals,  
digesting the millions that move through its innards.  
a continuous meal that feeds the hunger,  
the beast satiated.  
night falls.  
the energy obtained from the day's meal  
is shunted to kaleidoscopes of shimmering,  
brilliantly colored lights.  
beacons in the night, beckoning.  
the beast is seductive and elusive,  
alluring throngs of lonely minions.  
the seduction begins...  
unwary people,  
scuttling down the streets like insects.  
unmoving faces, animated robots.  
glazed dead eyes staring forward, hard shells.  
a symbiotic relationship, the food chain at its finest.  
the beast, all powerful,  
controlling and consuming those who  
succumb to the promise of unparalleled pleasure.  
the insect robots are programmed...  
do not speak, walk quickly,  
trust no one, lest you be defiled.  
an unspoken law, abided by.  
the beast eats the apple, little by little,  
bit by tasty bit...until only a core remains.  
rotting in the stench-filled air and the poison rain.  
erosion of the heart, capturing of the soul.  
possession and the consummation is complete,  
within the beast.



## loneliness

a winding path  
leads to sorrow  
a place of darkness  
where there is no tomorrow  
only cries of pain  
tears of thought  
where things are stolen  
and never bought  
where the common face  
is a frown  
where the sun won't rise  
it's always down  
no flowers bloom  
no trees grow  
just sadness and emptiness  
overflow





# zero

*eve*  
of the *age*

she lingers there—in the walled empty places  
between the walls we call our cities.

skeleton of metal, electric arc soul.  
chromium fangs, polished mirror smiles.  
stone throat, smoke breath.

but her eyes...  
yes.  
irises, delicate neon, flicker  
blue and green.  
quicksilver tears, molten glass.

eyes that see only want,  
that promise the world  
and everything in it.

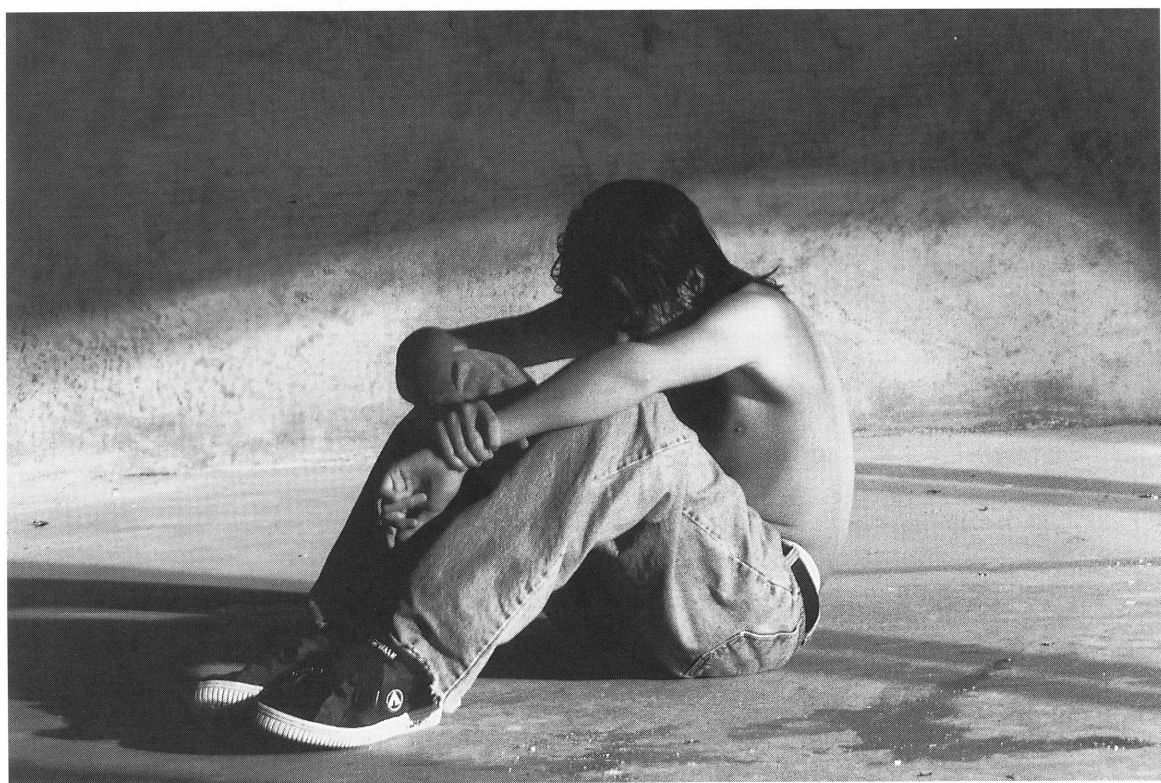
we turn our throats to her, eager.

she draws no blood, only desire.  
hunger devouring hunger  
with a taste of evanescence.  
forever being emptied, we are never exhausted.

she whispers in white sound,  
what pale hungers of the dark ages  
could hold a candle to the exquisite  
appetites of veins for needles,  
of unfulfilled existence for the hardsell,  
of ennui for death?

like lilith, firstborn,  
but no less our eve.  
she dances in the phospherdot garden  
where all new flesh will be born.

charged particle angels and fruits  
fallen chromosomes—temptation of cancer  
hunger devouring hunger  
til only appetite remains.







# moment moment

*brief*

[23]

cradled life and death in a mother's arms,  
a small miracle of god, frail of breath,  
fallen into harm's way.

is life's mortal creation, a sprouting seed  
of germination and physical will,  
by chance redeemed?

or seek we our maker from sod to sod,  
with breath's brief spell of hope deeming  
eternal bliss or hell?

angelic spirit who blessed earth but a day,  
immortal reminder of death's beckoning sway,  
illuminates the soul

to frail mortal acceptance of life's final dignity,  
mercy's regal display of uplifting grace.  
mystical passing of death.

*heart*  
**stanza**  
*notes*

i look at something  
and there you are  
i look at anything  
and i see you  
sometimes in memories  
sometimes in fantasies  
but you are always here  
i smile and blush  
i cry at songs  
i hear your voice  
but cannot touch  
i wait in contentment  
that you will come  
dance with me  
tonight, in my dreams  
dance with me  
tomorrow, in my arms  
dance with me  
always in my heart



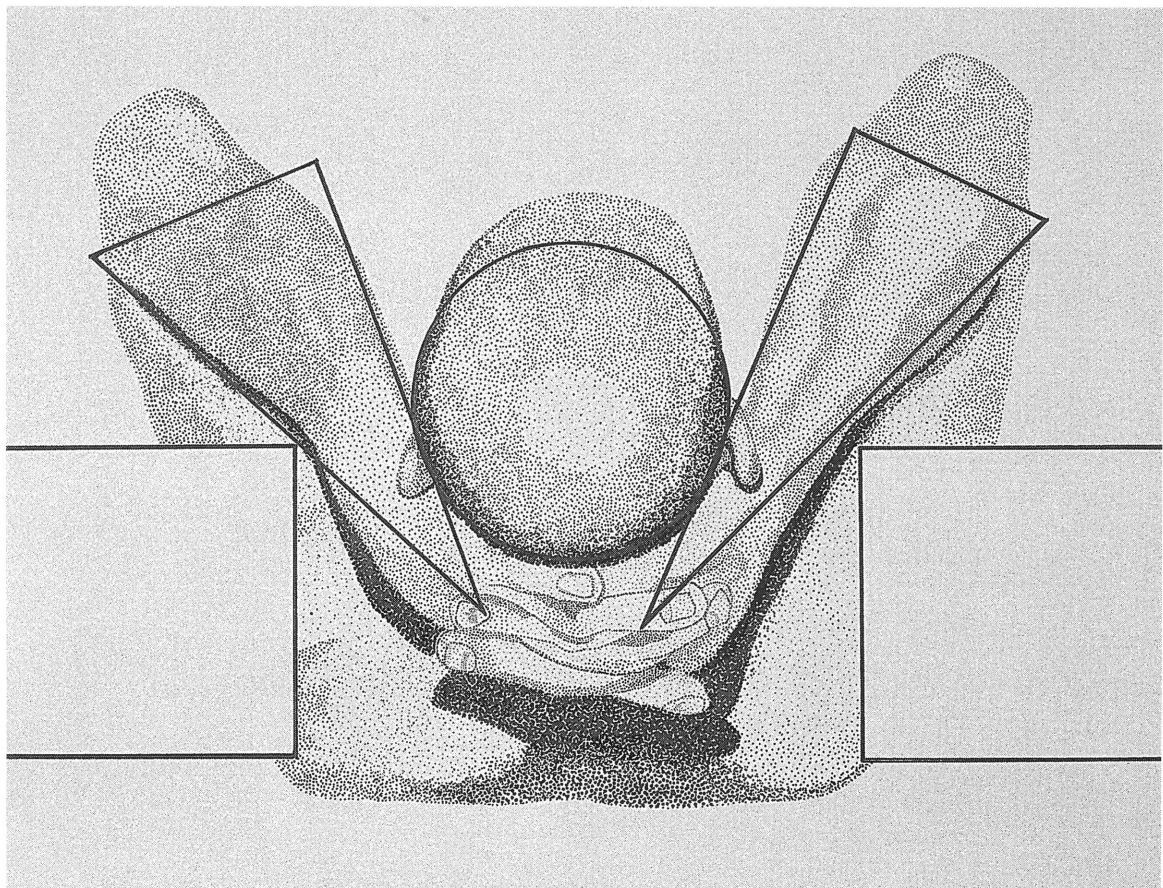


# the

the art is in the word...like magic.  
painting pictures with colorful descriptions,  
and the meaningful figurative language.  
accurate timing, intricate construction.  
weaving melodic passages of articulate detail  
with the skill of a painter.  
applying layers of intrigue, suspense, and emotion.  
fashioning a finished product,  
a masterpiece of well placed words.  
a work of art, timeless and unique.  
the pen as paintbrush, the words as media,  
the paper as canvas.  
the author as artist.

# *author as artist*

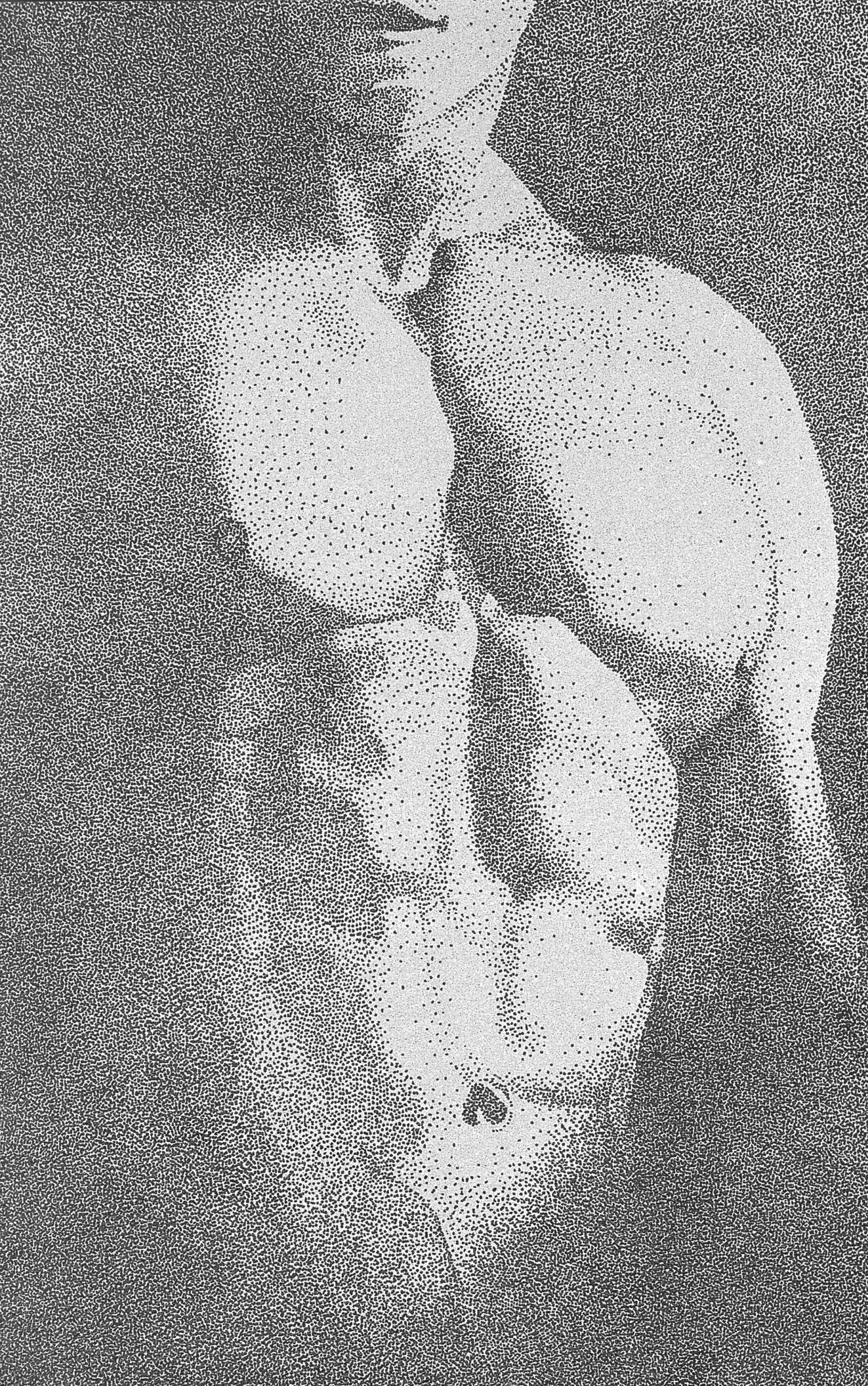
[27]





# elias

monet blue walls  
and black doorways  
erased the tentativeness  
of my first visit  
"weeping women"  
it was called  
i wondered why  
shards of images  
clashing emotion  
the gin and tonic helped  
fingering the purse  
whose strap lay between  
my breasts  
sexy in cuban heels  
he entered the room  
searching for me  
amidst the lovers and ex-wives  
his scent enveloped me  
then his hands  
sliding around my hips  
my body came alive  
he pulled me toward him  
his hair upon my shoulder  
as he kissed me gently  
spoon-like  
we paused momentarily  
before each canvas  
i could feel him  
urge me  
toward the door.



# *the* saw



# age

*heart*

[31

i want you to know  
that i see through  
the crowded room  
you keep so silent and neat  
with your cards and drums  
and comic book teases.  
all eyes aglitter  
and focused on you  
while magic and medicine  
fly through the air  
as thick as the lies  
spread while you claim  
to bear your soul to me  
in earnest, in truth.  
“behold the wisdom”  
is such a shame  
to be used  
not in service,  
but instead in the vain  
alleys of a mind  
whose choice is to prowl  
with the bear,  
the medicine,  
and the blessing of the owl.

[*constrain*]

MY 7 KODAK 5053 T



7 7A  
TMY 32 KODAK 5053 T



32 32A  
MY 11 KODAK 5053 T



11 11A



# i re- mem- ber

*in memory of  
my devoted  
grandfather-my pepa.*

that beautiful picture. what a day it must have been, the day it was taken. happy faces, handsome faces. a history is seen in that picture; not one ever mentioned in text books, but i won't let it be forgotten. just a simple picture, and i remember.

it happened as the world was once again experiencing war, the "big one." only months before departure to that far away place, japan, in the spring of 1945 he married the woman he had loved ever since their first encounter. they were married in his car, a 1935 ford, the justice of the peace standing just outside the driver's-side door as he and she said their "i do's" and vowed they'd be together always. before his departure, they posed for this memorable picture—i remember.

though done in black and white, the radiance of delight in their faces brings life to that picture, just as the sun brings life to the morning sky. he in his uniform, hat and all; she in her sunday best, hair pulled back with a ribbon: these two grand people, smiles on their lips, gladness in their eyes. she is leaning on his shoulder, sitting so very close at his side, with her hands clasped in her lap. and he has one arm around her, while the hand of the other gently holds her left arm. there they are, the left hand of each sporting their newly placed bands of gold. did they know then the blessed life together that would follow? of the life and love that they would pass to their children and all the generations to come? knowing it would never end, their love for each other

is clearly seen in that picture. in the spring of 1947, he returned home from the war. he went straight to sears, where she worked. the joy of seeing him after such a long separation is the fondest remembrance she has. soon after his return, they moved into their first home together. it was a two-room house close to the railroad tracks in the city; he worked for the railroad company. it was in this home that their first child was born—a daughter.

having grown up on a farm, he longed to once again be in the country. leaving the city and the railroad company behind, he and she moved to a small community—to a large farm house with acres and acres of land to cultivate. and enrich that land they certainly did. to his delight, he rode the tractor and tended the crops day after day. in the meantime, she gave birth to two other children—another daughter, and then a son. forty-four years later, he and she still live in that farm house, and he still plows and sows the land. and the enchanting faces in that picture still radiate love for each other.

their children grew and married, and each had a family of his own. and then their children grew and married, and brought great-grandchildren into the marvelous family. and the unyielding love he and she share with each other is the same unyielding love that together they share with their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. losing their given names along the way, the beautiful couple became



pepa and mema, names given to them by their first grandchild. and on the land that they purchased so long ago, where in the beginning only they and their daughter lived, is a row of homes belonging to their children and grandchildren.

i was that first grandchild, the one who renamed the couple in that unforgettable picture. sharing their home, i awake each morning to find them already at the breakfast table—coffee in hand, reading scriptures from the bible. they are my grandparents—the same two beautiful people who were married fifty years ago; the same two beautiful people who began a heritage of love for all generations to come. in time, some may not remember how it all began, but i have that picture—and i will always remember.

# [ere dits]

36]

photography + fine art

.....  
*grey man behind white chair*[julie barbeau]2

*film strips*[kate boardmann]4+33

*sculpture*[patty allen]7

*woman with hand cradling face*[julie barbeau]8

*sculpture*[malia murthy]10

*photos*[rebecca hutchison]12+13

*charcoal feet*[maureen botello]15

*cross*[colleen neeley]16

*photo*[deborah music]19

*photo*[erica shires]21

*hatchlings*[george ann kincaid]22

*photo*[paul mcdonald]25

*untitled*[jim gaither]27

*pumped*[nicolas bates]29

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*commemorative issue.*

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